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ABSTRACT

Identification of gifted students among cultural and linguistic minority groups and development of culturally relevant gifted programs have been problematic. In addition, although giftedness can manifest itself in many ways, few gifted programs have been established in nonacademic areas, especially in rural settings. This paper focuses on the identification procedures of a culturally relevant, visual arts, gifted and talented program in two rural New Mexico elementary schools with predominantly Hispanic or Native American (Pueblo) populations. Education in the arts not only is intrinsically valuable but also supports student persistence and achievement. Nevertheless, the limited resources of rural schools may lead to elimination of arts programs. Identification of exceptional abilities in the arts can be just as problematic as in academic areas if it relies on standardized tests. Although in the majority in the two program schools, Hispanic and Native American students were the minority in gifted and talented programs. A multidimensional approach to identification was developed that included the following: nomination by teacher, parent, or self; participation in an art show; teacher assessment on a checklist and a rating scale; assessment by a community artist; portfolio assessment; and student evaluation on two formal tests. Interviews with members of the identification committee indicate that the most effective selection method was the cross-referencing of the community artist's recommendations with those of teachers and students and results of the art show. (SV)

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A Model Program for Identifying Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Rural Gifted and Talented Students

The identification of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students as gifted and the development of programs that are culturally relevant has been complex and problematic. In the identification process assessment tools that have been traditionally used with mainstream students have not been effective in pinpointing the exceptional abilities of CLD students. In a National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE) document, Harry (1994), reported that African-American, Hispanic, and Native American students continue to be underrepresented in the gifted and talented category nationally and within several states studied.

According to the Jacob Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Act of 1988, the gifted are defined as children and youth who demonstrate evidence of high performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, leadership, or abilities in specific academic fields. While it is indicated that giftedness can manifest itself in a number of areas, public school programs have predominantly identified the gifted in academic and cognitive areas. Few programs have been established in these settings for students who demonstrate giftedness in nonacademic areas, especially in rural settings. This has left CLD and mainstream students who demonstrate giftedness in nonacademic areas out of gifted programs that could develop their talents to their fullest potential. This article focuses on a model program designed to identify and develop a culturally relevant visual arts gifted and talented program for Hispanic and Native American students in two rural schools.

The Arts as Essential

"Art plays and integral role in civilizing a society and its members. If introduced early and incorporated regularly into instruction, art teaches us about our capacity to communicate ideas and feelings in a variety of modes and media; to analyze data through analogy and illustration; to accept compromise, ambiguity, and difference as positive human traits; and to construct ethical standards of judgment and action. Works of art tell us where we have been, indicate where we are, and leave evidence for future generations to examine for their own education, enlightenment, and delight. Art is amazingly inclusive with it existence as an uninhibited entity in societies" (Godfrey, 1992 p.596)

Education in the arts has the potential to produce collective and individual civility by provoking a curiosity that legitimizes, extends, and illuminates existence. The visual arts can develop both individuality and the capability to think clearly, to criticize premises, to speculate on assumptions, and to reason through deduction (Whitehead in Godfrey, 1993). School districts which have incorporated arts in their curriculum and added art teachers have also demonstrated improved scores on standardized test (e.g. Sampson County, North Carolina; Profiles of high school students compiled by the College Board (1987, 1988, and 1989; National Center for Education Statistics).

Education of the arts can also help achieve a number of the national education goals for the year 2000. As stated by Hanna (1992), the arts can help retain students in school and improve

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the high school graduation rate, the arts can promote student achievement in challenging subject matter, and the arts can foster a disciplined environment. Goals of art education include problem solving, higher order-thinking skills, risk-taking, teamwork, and creativity, which can also be viewed in terms of the U.S. competitiveness in the world economy (Hanna).

CLD Students and the Arts

The visual arts can develop both individuality and the capability to think clearly, to criticize, to speculate on assumptions, and to reason through d eduction (Whitehead in Godfrey, 1993). As stated by Hanna (1992) education in the arts has the power to do and be many things - to be intrinsically valuable and to help fulfill nonaesthetic, utilitarian goals. Evidence through several studies and projects have demonstrated surprising academic improvements in students whom otherwise might be considered "failures in school". School districts which have incorporated arts in their curriculum and added arts teachers have also demonstrated improved scores on standardized tests (e.g. Sampson County, North Carolina; Profiles of high school students compiled by the College Board 1987, 1988, and 1989; National Center for Education Statistics).

Identification of Rural Gifted in the Arts

In rural areas the challenge to identify culturally and linguistically diverse students as gifted and to provide culturally relevant programs that enhance exceptional skills in nonacademic areas is even greater. Personnel that come from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds may be limited or nonexistent. In addition, the likelihood is greater that identification procedures and programs will focus on academic areas due to the limited types of programs available. Rural communities often do not have the same resources that urban areas might in visual or performing arts. While rural communities may view visual and performing arts as important, there may not be the resources in the community to support such endeavors. Schools reflect the makeup of the communities and often in rural school districts, arts programs are the first to be eliminated. Even when schools support the arts rural gifted students will need to travel to the city to study and enhance their knowledge of the arts.

Rationale for Using a Multidimensional Approach

Identification of exceptional abilities in the arts can be just as problematic as other areas of giftedness if traditional standardized measures are used which do not include culturally and linguistically diverse children and youth in representative numbers. As noted by Spicker, Southern, and Davis (1987) identification standards that rely heavily on standardized tests tend to underidentify gifted students from traditional rural areas. Typically, in schools, children are expected to respond in a few narrow forms when attempting to demonstrate their grasp of a subject; through answers on a test or perhaps an essay (Goldberg, 1992). Student's artwork can provide them an opportunity to demonstrate understanding and *how* they understand specific concepts. Artwork is meant as the artistic expression in any medium: music, poetry, drawing, painting, dance, fiction, sculpture, photography, and so on (Goldberg. 1992). "Expanding notions of assessments to incorporate the possibilities offered by the arts can create exciting opportunities for teachers and learners. As many teachers seek to reflect our multicultural society in the subject matter they present and in the questions they explore. Teachers and learners bring with them to school a great variety of cultures, experiences, and histories. They also bring with them varied

methods of expression. By restricting students to traditional ways of expression - and thus to traditional means of evaluation- teachers may be preventing these students from fully working with and displaying their knowledge. By widening their vision of acceptable expression and ways of knowing, teachers can begin to create a community in which students have the essential freedom to learn" (Goldberg, 1992, p. 623).

The identification of gifted and talented students primarily is accomplished using teacher recommendations supported by standardized achievement and group or individually administered intelligence test scores (Aamidor & Spicker, 1995). However, many students who demonstrate behavioral characteristics that do not *please* their teachers or who perform poorly on tests may be overlooked for gifted and talented programs.

Theoretical foundations of The Model Program

The Model Program was developed to primarily meet the needs of under-represented groups of children from rural communities in gifted and talented school programs. The two sites selected were rural and had a predominant Native American or Hispanic student population. Both schools were typical in their identification of gifted and talented students in that they relied on traditional methods of assessment and the programs was directed toward the academically gifted. Despite the majority of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the schools, these students represented the minority in programs for the gifted and talented.

When The Model Program was first proposed, several goals were established for the program. One goal was to develop methods of assessment that went beyond traditional methods which relied on standardized instruments. Cultural sensitivity as well as their appropriateness in the identification of talent in the arts was of utmost importance. In addition, a second goal was to develop a differentiated visual arts curriculum, instructional strategies and opportunities appropriate for rural, undeserved, ethnically diverse, gifted and talented students. In working towards this goal, the program relied upon the expertise and experience of the director, teachers, parents, and students to develop and test visual arts identification procedures and curricula appropriate for each community and culture served.

Sites

The two schools chosen to serve as project sites were rural, agricultural, economically disadvantaged, and had substantial numbers of culturally diverse student populations. Both schools were located in the northern part of New Mexico on the east side of the Rio Grande. Many of the people make all or part of their livelihood as artisans making jewlry, pottery, moccasins, and beaded handwork. The people of The Pueblp, helping perserve those traditions practiced by remaining in and serving theri community. The other school prides itself on its strong bilingual language program, academic enrichment programs, and sports programs available for students.

During the three year period of implementing the program, three different phases were developed. Thh first phase consisted of developing alternative identification and selection procedures of students to be participants in the project. The second phase focused on developing a differentiated curriculum for each site that met the cultural and individual needs of the student populations. The thrid phase focused on the continuation of adapting the curriculum to the students and final evaluation of the project. The focus of the rest of this paper will focus on the identification process.

Identification Process

Individual assessments developed by the school sites

The primary goal for the initial implementation of the program was for schools to develop the procedures for the identification of gifted and talented students in the visual arts. Identification Committees were established and were comprised of parents, teachers, artists, and administrators. It was the goal of each school to establish procedures for student identification based on methods which were sensitive to the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences of and ethnic identity inherent in their community. In order to increase the possibility that no student would go unidentified, multiple methods were utilized to ensure that equal opportunities in the selection process were used.

One of the first steps in the process was to gather teachers and others who would be involved in the identification and have them begin to examine giftedness in visual arts from a local community and cultural perspective. Several days were spent brainstorming and discussing how talent in art manifested itself in the community. In addition, participants came up with a list of characteristics that would indicate talent in different types of visual arts (Those characteristics were later used to develop different surveys for the nomination and identification process.).

The identification procedures utilized multiple methods in order to increase the likelihood that students form a wide range of backgrounds (e.g., economic, social) would have equal opportunity in the selection process. A process similar to the Pentegonal Implicit Approach outlined by Sternberg and Zhang (1995) was used. Schools used parent nominations, teacher nominations, peer nominations, self-nominations, art samples, artists recommendations, and art shows as their criteria.

Parent Nomination Forms. Parent Nomination Forms were sent home with students. This form consisted of questions which dealt with their son's/daughter's work habits, hobbies and interests in art.

Teacher Survey. Identification of students was also done through the use of teacher recommendations. Teacher recommendations were obtained through formal and informal methods. Formal recommendations consisted of teachers filling out a Teacher Survey which dealt with the identification of children by asking teachers to assess students interest in art and other creative abilities. Personal contact with the site coordinator as an informal means in which to obtain recommendations. Discussions were held between the site coordinator and classroom teachers regarding individual students. In all cased, the teachers could also write their students' recommendations down and submit them to the site coordinator.

Peer Identification. Students were asked to identify peers on the Peer Nomination Form who exhibited artistic and creative ability as specified in items on the nomination form. Student responses provided a basis for a pool of students' names that could be discussed with classroom teachers and parents.

Self-Nomination. Self-nominations were another method utilized in the identification of students who were possibly gifted and talented in the creative arts. Students were asked to fill out a Self-Inventory Form which consisted of a questionnaire intended to assess a student's interest in art and other creative activities.

Art Show. An art show was scheduled during the Fall semester and students who were interested in the program and in showcasing their work were asked to participate. Community artist judged each piece of art using a 5-point likert type scale. The artists judged the artwork based on originality, technique, composition, uniqueness, and movement. Judges tallied scores

and identified students based on consensual judge agreement. These recommendations from the judges were compared with the nomination forms and previous selection processes. Possibly students who were gifted and talented in the he visual arts saw this as a motivation activity.

Indian Student Creativity Behavior Checklist. Teachers were asked to fill out the Indian Student Creativity Behavior Checklist on all students enrolled in grades 3-5. This checklist asked questions pertinent to general creative ability in a variety of areas (e.g., writing and thought). Scoring was done on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from (1) never to (5) always.

Student Self-Nomination Form. Students who were interested in participating in The Model Program had an opportunity to nominated themselves via the Student Self-Nomination Form. This gave the students a chance to indicate what their interest were, how often they engaged in art activities, and their overall artistic awareness.

Teacher Assessment Form. One of the Identification Committee Members, acted as the Native American Art Consultant. He is a graduate of the "American Indian Institute of Art" as well as being a professional painter and jewelry maker. A native of The Pueblo, this consultant is active in the community and is a successful role model for the students. He completed the Teacher Assistant Form on each child in grades 3-5. He would sit in on art classes and observe the children during their art lesson and fill our the form after approximately four observations. Brief narratives were documented based on his professional observations relative to the students artwork. Students were also scored on a 5-point likert type scale on questions dealing with the tribal/cultural perspectives.

Gifted Talented Rating Scale. Copies of the Gifted Talented Rating Scale were distributed to classroom teachers for their nomination of students' participation in the program. This survey evaluated students' potential qualifications based on a 5 point scale ranking Personal Human Qualities and Aesthetic Qualities.

Portfolios. In order to assess the students individual art work, Portfolio assessment was used throughout the project. Both teachers and students were able to study a student's growth, mastery of art media and techniques, and ability to explore and express ideas and feelings through art. The use of portfolios was considered important because they (a) focus on a child's own abilities rather than comparing children's abilities; (b) measure individual student growth over time through comparisons of works of art; (c) provides the student with ownership; (d) encourages collective assessment by teachers and students; (e) focus upon student strengths, not weaknesses; and (f) builds self esteem through successes.

Portfolio assessment involves the student in the evaluation process. Asking students to talk about their art, to explain their ideas, their choices and materials, and their use of design elements and principles, is an important part of the process. Comparing and contrasting works enables the student to see growth and new achievements. Discussion between teacher and student also stresses the importance of the process of art-making and the ideas behind a work of art, rather than placing all emphasis on the final product.

Student work sample portfolios were beginning to be used to identify students who displayed talent in the visual arts. Portfolios consisted of classroom art samples created during the first portion of the school year. Classroom teachers and the Native American Art Consultant reviewed the students' artwork, identifying those students who showed talent. A professional artist was invited to demonstrate to the students how portfolios are used.

Formal Assessments. Both the Clark's Test of Drawing Ability and Torrance's Test of Creativity were administered during the first year of the program. Although both test appeared to

be culturally sensitive and fair, they were found to be culturally biased against the Pueblo students. One of the teachers noted that children were at a disadvantage when such tasks as drawing a house were evaluated on the basis of details like shutters, landscaping, and dormer windows. Housing in the Pueblo feature single-story, flat-roofed adobe houses in grassless clusters separated from a few straggly trees near a creek-width river. It would be very difficult to score either test fairly. Although results were questionable the drawings were used as part of the portfolios developed in the screening process.

Effectiveness of the Identification and Selection Procedures

Once the identification procedures had been established and implemented, the Identification Committee members were interviewed individually. The most effective method for effectively selecting the gifted and talented students was the cross-referencing of the art consultant's independent recommendations with the classroom teachers' recommendation along with the students' recommendations and the art show. The students in both schools, appeared to be very aware and accurate in assessing their own abilities relative to the visual arts. These students also participated in the art show, suggesting that those students who were motivated to create, enjoyed the prospect of entering a competition, and had talent, entered their art in the show. One of the most important factors that had to be considered throughout the identification process was the need to respect the tribal and local customs of the community, therefore reflecting the importance of having representatives of the community in the Identification Committee's.

Teacher nominations were considered moderately successful as a concern was voiced by one of the committee members that this method was too subjective. Peer nominations also assisted in the identification of students for the program. However, teachers reported that some students nominated peers based on likability or popularity, or may not have understood the purpose of the peer nominations.

Overall Outcomes

The model program met several of the goals that were initially proposed. One of the goals addressed the need to develop modified procedures and materials to help teachers, as well as parents and community members in the identification, education, and evaluation of rural gifted and talented arts students from diverse populations. This goal was met by the development of multifaceted identification procedures that did not rely on the use of standardized test or focusing on academic achievement. Community members and parents were involved in the process, as well as local artist.

Another goal of the project was to establish and provide a differentiated visual and performing arts curriculum appropriate for rural, underserved, ethnically diverse, gifted and talented students in the identified states. In New Mexico, this project allowed for the establishment of the first arts education program in the state in four years, and the only formal art program for the Pueblo in the public school. The developed curricula by each site were culturally specific and could be easily incorporated by any elementary school teacher.

<u>Personal student triumphs</u>

Along with the overall establishment of alternative identification methods and development of the differentiated curriculum, personal student triumphs are important to address. Overall students who participated in the project had the opportunity to work and learn from the

experiences of local artists. A major urban newspaper previewed the program and included pieces of the students artwork. During the art exhibit held at the opening of the Church, students had the opportunity to sell their artwork and actually keep their earnings. Students who participated demonstrated improved motivation and self-esteem, especially for some students who had been described as having been behavior problems but "turned around" as a direct result of their involvement and achievements in the project. One particular student was offered a position at local advertising agency. Students developed long distance friendships by the cross-site pen-pals that they kept. This activity was enhanced by the tele-conference that was held in which the students actually got to speak-to each-other and meet on the screen.

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